

REPORT TO:	Licensing Committee
DATE:	4 December 2019
LEAD OFFICER:	Head of Planning and Public Protection
CONTACT OFFICER:	Senior Technical Officer (Licensing) licensing@denbighshire.gov.uk 01824 706433
SUBJECT:	Review of the existing Approved Testing Station process

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 For Members to consider reviewing the current process for nominating approved testing stations to carry out compliance testing for hackney carriage and private hire vehicles within the County and to consider some options of improving the existing regime.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 To seek the views of Members on the current process and to further seek approval to review and consult with key stakeholders on an up to date and improved process.
- 2.2 Under the provisions of the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976 a licensing authority has a duty to ensure that hackney carriage and private hire vehicles are of a suitable type, comfortable and in a suitable mechanical condition so as to be safe for the purpose.
- 2.3 By reviewing the existing process for nominated Testing Stations, to establish if it remains fit for purpose and recommend improvements to ensure consistency and compliance across the County.

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Denbighshire currently has 8 nominated Testing Stations throughout the County, 5 in the North (one being the County's Fleet Management Centre in Bodelwyddan) and 3 in the South, which Fleet Services approve on an

annual basis.

- 3.2 The fees charged for a compliance test, by the nominated Testing Stations are set by the individual garages and vary per garage. The variation in the cost of tests causes some concern amongst Officers that there is a possibility that competitive pricing may be linked to a reduction in the quality of testing.
- 3.3 In 2010 Members approved a process for licensing all approved Testing Stations within the County that carried out compliance tests on behalf of the Council. It was envisaged that by introducing a standardised process for testing stations, would in turn, ensure consistency across the Testing Stations.
- 3.4 The process involved the following:
 1. To utilise experts that exist within the County's Fleet Management Section to ensure the Council's Policy in relation to standards is appropriate and consistent across the County to ensure safety and comfort of passengers is maintained.
 2. Testing Stations will be required to record information regarding testing requirements as deemed necessary by the Council, and submit the information within 24 hours of the test by FAX to Fleet Services Department at Bodelwyddan and submit on a weekly basis a report to the Licensing Administration Team of all vehicles that have been tested within the last seven days, whether the vehicle has passes/failed/advised.
 3. Testing Stations will be subject to supervisory visits from suitably qualified persons who, on demand, will afford the opportunity to view the testing process and examine any equipment being used to carry out the test.
 4. Testing Stations will comply with and follow the "Best Practice Guide National Inspection Standards for Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Vehicles" issued by the Public Authority Transport Network (PATN).
- 3.5 Approved testing stations are issued with a permit and conditions, which can be found at Appendix A.
- 3.6 Over the years, it has become apparent that the above process, as detailed at 3.4, is not being fully adhered to by all Testing Stations and the standard of testing differs from each garage.
- 3.7 Since the beginning of the year we have been notified of very few test failures.

- 3.8 Some Testing Stations only carry out a handful of compliance tests a year, and Officers are mindful that these garages may not be familiar with the policy and standards, unlike a garage that carries out tests on a regular basis, resulting in a lack of consistency throughout the current testing process.
- 3.9 Taking the above into consideration, Officers would like to review the current process to consider the following options:
1. No change to the current authorised Testing Stations
 2. Invite expressions of interest from MOT garages to a specific Service Level Agreement
 3. Reduce the number of authorised Testing Stations in the County
 4. Move over to In-house compliance testing
- 3.10 Members can view the advantages and disadvantages of the above 4 options at Appendix B.
- 3.11 If Members were minded to support in-house testing by the County's Fleet Services Depot in Bodelwyddan, there would potentially be a need for Fleet Services to provide an additional site in the south of the County. Early enquiries with Fleet Services have indicated that they should be able to support such a request.
- 3.12 Officers have consulted with the County's Passenger Transport Section, and they would be supportive of any change that improves the safety of the current licensed vehicle fleet, and they also support moving towards in house testing.
- 3.13 Officers have also consulted with all North Wales Licensing Authorities to establish whether they have in-house testing or have considered same. At the time of writing this report, no responses have been received from any of our neighbouring authorities. Officers will report on any update at the committee meeting.

4.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To look at in house testing as a preferred option but subject to further review and consultation with all relevant parties.
- 4.2 If Members were not to support in-house testing at this time, then Officers recommend a review of the current process is conducted.

